

Originator  
Planning

Item  
**Overview of the update to the South Loop District AUAR**

Date  
8/25/2016

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Description

In 2002, the City adopted an Alternative Urban Areawide Review (AUAR) for the South Loop District. An AUAR is a substitute form of environmental assessment that considers the cumulative impacts of anticipated future development in a defined area. Because the AUAR studies the cumulative environmental impacts of multiple development proposals, individual Environmental Assessment Worksheets (EAW) or Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) are not required to be prepared for development proposals covered by the AUAR. While this helps streamline the review of future development projects, it also provides for a more coordinated and comprehensive review of the impacts of overall development in the context of a larger area, rather than simply reviewing impacts related to development on a single site.

The AUAR process is regulated under Minnesota Rules Chapter 4410.3610, Subpart 1. These rules prescribe the information required in the environmental review and the official review process, which includes review by a number of State and regional agencies as well as all adjacent municipalities. To remain effective, the AUAR must be updated every five years or if development or infrastructure projects are proposed that were not anticipated in the original AUAR.

The South Loop AUAR was updated in 2009 and 2012. Both of these updates were minor, as relatively little of the development projected in 2002 had occurred, in part due to the recession. However, several infrastructure projects were implemented, such as the extension of Lindau Lane east of 24<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The previous interim updates incorporated these types of unforeseen projects.

The current update is intended to be more comprehensive and will incorporate the findings from updates to the South Loop District traffic study and sewer and water utility models. It also identifies several new sites assumed to redevelop by 2040 that were not anticipated in 2002. For example, the five “Alpha” office/warehouse parcels acquired by the City/Port Authority in 2010 were not anticipated to redevelop in the 2002 AUAR. In addition, due to shifts in the economy and development markets, the overall amount of development assumed by 2040 is less than originally assumed in the 2002 AUAR. As such, the 2002 AUAR development scenario remains the “worst case” scenario for many of the environmental impacts assessed in the AUAR.

At the study session, staff will provide an overview of the AUAR update and review schedule.

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Requested Action

Informational only. The Planning Commission is not required to make a formal recommendation on the AUAR. This update is intended to provide Planning Commissioners an opportunity to comment and ask questions about the AUAR and the update process.

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Attachments: